

Code of Conduct for staff, volunteers and Board members

1 Introduction

- 1.1 All employees, volunteers and Board members are expected to follow the code of conduct so that the programmes and services managed by North Halifax Partnership (NHP) maintain an efficient and credible service.
- 1.2 These guidelines are designed to run alongside all other NHP Policies, which all form part of this code; and staff, volunteers and Board members should take time to familiarise themselves with these.
- 1.3 All principles of the code of conduct apply to volunteers as well as employees. (Paragraphs 6, 12 and 15 below do not apply to volunteers.) Conditions relating to volunteer placements are covered in NHP Volunteer Policy. There are some additional principals of the code of conduct which apply to Board members and can be found in appendix 1
- 1.4 The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to be clear about the expectations NHP has of staff, volunteers and Board members and to provide guidance so any issues or conflicts can be avoided.
- 1.5 All staff, volunteers and Board members are expected to actively demonstrate the behaviours in NHP expected behaviours document.
- 1.6 All staff, volunteers and Board members associated with NHP have a responsibility to act in a way that does not question their intention or integrity.

2 Outside commitments and personal interests

- 2.1 The integrity of NHP and the programmes it manages is essential to its success. Staff, volunteers and Board members must not undermine the programmes, their own position or that of their colleagues at work or off duty.

All staff, volunteers and Board members should make sure that:

- Their work and personal interests do not conflict
- They declare any financial interest in projects associated with NHP and any of the programmes managed by the Partnership
- They declare any non-financial interests (e.g. a personal interest) in projects associated with NHP and any of the programmes managed by

the Partnership.

- 2.2 For these purposes a personal interest of a spouse or partner or any other relative or any person with whom they have a close personal relationship is deemed to be a personal interest of the employee.
- 2.3 Staff should declare to the NHP Board membership of any organisation closed to the public without formal membership and having a commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules, membership and / or conduct.
- 2.4 Staff must not use their work position and / or knowledge to benefit themselves or others through political, community or voluntary work.
- 2.5 No worker should involve the service in party political activity of any kind and must keep their personal political activities separate from their work activities.
- 2.6 If staff are involved in party political activities, they must ensure that, as per the rules surrounding political activities and charitable organisations that boundaries are not blurred between the views of individuals and views of the service
- 2.7 When lobbying, campaigning or making representations to political bodies the service must be seen as presenting a non-party political argument and must present a balanced case.
- 2.8 This part of the Code of Conduct is to protect both staff and NHP from allegations of bias or unfairness. It is recognised that staff may have outside interests. Staff are advised that they should always speak to their line manager if they think these are – or may be viewed by others as being-linked to or in conflict with NHP.

3 Work outside NHP

- 3.1 Staff must seek approval from their manager prior to taking on other employment. Any discussion and decision will be recorded.
- 3.2 Paid employment outside NHP must not conflict with the aims of the Partnership's programmes nor undermine its work in any way.
- 3.3 Voluntary and community work commitments must not conflict with the aims of the Partnership's programmes nor undermine its work in any way.

4 Relationships with service users

- 4.1 All staff, volunteers and Board members must never allow themselves to be compromised by, nor take advantage of any relationship with service users and ensure that trust is never abused (see also Data Protection Policy).
- 4.2 It is important that staff are careful about the nature of their relationships with service users and should not become intimately, nor financially involved with them.

5 Potential Conflict of Interest in Case Working

- 5.1 Where an individual staff member knows or has any kind of relationship with a client or a member of their family, it would be appropriate for that individual to consider, along with their line manager whether there is likely to be any potential conflict of interest or alleged conflict of interest which may affect the working of the case. This consideration should be documented along with the decision for the individual staff member to retain or to pass on the case and the reasons for the decision arrived at.

6 Appointments and other Employment Matters

- 6.1 Employees involved in appointments should ensure that these are made on the basis of merit, in accordance with the Recruitment and Selection Policy. An appointment which was based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the post may render the employer open to a claim under equality legislation. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees must not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant or have any personal relationship outside work with them.
- 6.2 Similarly, employees must not be the decision – maker in decisions relating to certain employment matters. Examples include discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for another employee who is a relative, partner or with whom they have a close relationship. Employees are reminded that this provision exists to protect them against any accusations of bias or unfair treatment.

7 Relationships between employees

- 7.1 Where a personal relationship exists between employees, an employee should declare this to their line manager. This is because the relationship could be deemed as a conflict of interest, trust or breach of confidentiality. The line manager will advise if this personal relationship is likely to represent a conflict of interests.
- 7.2 Where a personal relationship exists between employees who are in a line management or supervisory relationship at work, then they must not be the decision-maker in recruitment and selection, improving performance, pay

and grading, disciplinary, grievance or any other management activity involving the other employee. As above, this provision exists to protect managers against any accusations of bias or unfair treatment.

8 Gifts, hospitality and Anti-Bribery

8.1 Staff, volunteers, and Board members should avoid accepting gifts except in specified circumstances. This is because giving and receiving gifts might be seen to influence the independence of any decisions made. The acceptance of gifts is open to misinterpretation. It could create an impression by the donor that the recipient will in some way reciprocate in the future. Therefore:

- Personal gifts must not be solicited under any circumstances
- Gifts of cash should not be accepted under any circumstances
- Anyone offering gifts should be asked to donate them to the service rather than any individual; these gifts should then be shared across the staff.
- Gifts received should be returned with thanks if they are considered unreasonably lavish or expensive and the motives for their donation are in doubt
- It is particularly important that staff and Board members should not accept gifts of a high value from service users although birthday cards etc and small gifts on occasions such as staff leaving may be accepted. Any such gifts should be reported to your manager.
- If staff are in any doubt about the appropriateness of gifts, they should speak to their line manager.
- In some circumstances offers of hospitality can be open to misinterpretation and should be treated in the same way as a gift, before agreeing to accept the invitation.

8.2 Staff and Board members should familiarise themselves with the Anti-Bribery Policy for further information.

9 Financial Transactions

9.1 Staff, volunteers, and Board members must keep their personal monies separate from NHP services' money to avoid misinterpretation and/or allegations of financial mismanagement.

9.2 Staff, volunteers, and Board members must not borrow money from service users nor should service users be loaned money from personal funds. Under no circumstances should Service funds be loaned to Service users,

staff, or volunteers. Staff should be aware of possible implications of the private purchase/sale of goods between staff, volunteers/service users. This is actively discouraged. The sale or purchase of any illegal, offensive, or inappropriate goods between staff, volunteers, or service users will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

- 9.3 Staff cannot receive any payments, grants, or loans from Service funds except normal payments under their terms and conditions of employment or reimbursements of legitimate out of pocket expenses incurred in their work as determined by Service policies and procedures.

10 Purchasing Goods And Services

- 10.1 Staff, volunteers, and Board members must avoid any suspicion of giving preferential treatment to suppliers of goods and services by separating their private purchasing from that of the NHP and the programmes it manages.

11 Contractors

- 11.1 Employees and Board members must disclose to the Business Support Manager via the "Declaration of Potential Conflict of Interest" form, all relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors or potential contractors. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders, and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners, or relatives in the tendering process.

12 Interests

- 12.1 Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, should declare that relationship to the Business Support Manager via the "Declaration of Potential Conflict of Interest" form. In all cases, employees should declare any interests/ relationships as soon as is practicable.

13 General conduct

- 13.1 All those who come into contact with NHP's programmes have a right to be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect at all times. All staff, volunteers and Board members will follow the NHP expected behaviours charter. Under the equality and diversity policy NHP will always challenges all forms of discriminatory practice, and we encourage others to do so in an appropriate manner.

We expect staff, volunteers, and Board members to:

- Understand and implement NHP's core ethos of consulting and listening to others and promoting active inclusion in all aspects of NHP's operations and development.
- Accept personal responsibility for the ways in which NHP presents itself to the public.
- Be open and honest about their own and everyone else's behaviour, performance, and assumptions.
- Offer support when they think it is needed and respond to calls for help.
- Behave in a civilised and courteous manner to everyone else and respect others' gender, race, culture, class, different abilities, sexuality, age, religion and work.
- Use language – including tone and body language- sensitively.
- Create an atmosphere where people feel able to express their views freely, being prepared to make their expectations of themselves and others clear.
- At all times show respect, sensible and best value use of resources in terms of money, IT, telephone, equipment, plant and machinery, electricity, and other office resources.
- Have enthusiasm for promoting and demonstrating the philosophy of NHP in the wider arena.
- Dress appropriately to represent NHP. We have a specific dress code for staff and volunteers working with children to maintain safety and comfort. Staff and volunteers must not display body art or clothing marked with slogans or graphics which could cause offence to others.

13.2 Staff, volunteers, and Board members should conduct themselves in a manner which maintains the integrity of NHP within the community. Victimisation, discrimination, bullying and harassment will be treated as disciplinary offences within NHP. Therefore, any attitude or behaviour which may result in a person feeling threatened or distressed by the above will not be tolerated. This is whether the action was intentional or otherwise.

13.3 Extra care needs to be taken over personal and professional relationships, particularly if there are 'power' relationships involved e.g. supervisor and supervisee. Adverse consequences resulting from the blurring of personal and professional boundaries will be addressed and may result in disciplinary action if necessary.

14 Confidentiality –

14.1 The work of NHP may involve confidential information, which should be always respected. In particular, the NHP Data Protection Policy, NHP Privacy Notice and associated working practices set out how the organisation protects personal data of staff, service users and stakeholders.

14.2 There will sometimes be a need to share confidential information within the Service for the better delivery of Service services and staff should always seek line management advice if they are in any doubt. Staff must treat as confidential:

- Information about individual Service users
- Matters concerning employees' personnel information.
- Matters arising from any grant funders' conditions of funding.

14.3 Where it is necessary to share information with an individual or organisation outside the Service the express consent of the individual concerned should be sought (preferably in writing).

14.4 In circumstances where an individual or another person may be at serious risk of harming or endangering themselves or others it may be necessary to break these confidentiality rules. If in doubt staff should discuss the situation with a member of the management team. See Information Sharing Working Practice for more information.

14.5 Staff, volunteers, and Board members will not engage in casual or social discussions about service users; neither will they engage with services users in discussions about other NHP colleagues and services except in the course of providing an appropriate service.

15 Failure to follow the code of conduct

- 15.1 Failure to follow the code of conduct may damage NHP and its work. Breaches of the code of conduct will lead to disciplinary proceedings in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 15.2 Where a volunteer breaches the code of conduct, their volunteer placement may be terminated, depending on the seriousness of the breach.

Appendix 1

Code of conduct principals for Board members.

These additional guidelines are designed to run alongside this code of conduct policy and all other NHP policies.

- 1.1 It is acknowledged that the role of Board member involves a commitment of time and energy and that Board members, when accepting the role are aware that they are required to:
- Attend meetings.
 - Read and prepare for meetings.
 - Accept a fair share of responsibilities.
 - Serve on sub-committees or panel meetings in relation to staffing issues.
 - Contribute to meetings in an open and honest way and be prepared to have robust discussions with colleagues.
 - Recognise their own training and development needs, in relation to their role and be proactive in addressing these needs.
- 1.2 Board members should never use their role as a senior leader of the Charity to specifically benefit themselves or other individuals or agencies in a way that could be considered inappropriate or against the charitable aims of NHP.
- Note – Directors of the company will be required annually to sign a FRS8 declaration of interest form to confirm that they understand the principles of conflict of interest. *See also Company Article 72 Declaration of Interest*
- 1.3 No Board member should involve the service in party political activity of any kind and must keep their personal political activities separate from their Board activities.
- 1.4 If Board members are involved in party political activities, they must ensure that, as per the rules surrounding political activities and charitable organisations that boundaries are not blurred between the views of

individuals and views of the service.

- 1.5 When lobbying, campaigning, or making representations to political bodies the service must be seen as presenting a non-party political argument and must present a balanced case. This part of the Code of Conduct is to protect NHP from allegations of bias or unfairness.
- 1.6 Board members should always act with integrity and should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties. Board members have a responsibility to act in a way that does not question their intentions or integrity.
- 1.7 Board members are required to make decisions objectively in relation to making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits. Decisions should be made on merit. They have a responsibility to always act fairly and without prejudice.
- 1.8 The Anti-bribery Policy applies to all Board members and Board members should not seek, give, or accept bribes, or act in a way that their integrity in this regard could be questioned.
- 1.9 Board members are not permitted to speak on the organisation's behalf unless this permission is specifically authorised.
- 1.10 Board members will deal with highly sensitive information around financial, grants, contracts, and staffing. Board members must treat this information with the highest of respect and confidentiality.
- 1.11 Board members do not receive any payment or dividend for their role. They are however entitled to claim out of pocket expenses, for example travel and childcare costs when attending meetings, training, conferences.
- 1.12 For the rules concerning a director receiving payment for goods or services provided to the company *also see Company Article 6 Income and Property.*
- 1.13 When dealing with any complaints about CEO or the Chair these need to be dealt with by the independent Board member. All complaint should follow the complaints policy.
- 1.14 Failure to follow the code of conduct may damage NHP and its work. Any serious breach of the code of conduct may lead to a Board member being asked to resign. *See also Company Article 75 Removal of a Director.*

